

Germany Again Turns Toward the East

Teutons Not Expected to Accept Peace Terms as Dictated at Versailles After Regaining Strength

By Frank H. Simonds

WITHIN the last week we have passed the first anniversary of the date on which Germany, by her application for peace, based on the fourteen points of Mr. Wilson, actually recognized the fact of defeat. In less than a month we shall pass the first milestone since the armistice definitely established the surrender of Germany under conditions as completely disadvantageous as those France accepted after the fall of Napoleon. It is possible, then, to make a brief estimate of the developments of a year, with a certain advantage of perspective hitherto impossible.

A year ago it was the belief in America, at least, conceivably in certain quarters in Great Britain, that peace could be made on such terms as to open the way for mutual understandings among the nations which had fought through the war. Frequently in American journals, at least occasionally in British, one encountered the phrases, "peace of understanding," "reconciliation," "a healing peace." Can it be said honestly or candidly that there is even the same shadowy prospect of reconciliation now, so far as Germany is concerned, that existed a year ago? It seems to me not.

Germany Has Emerged From Shadow of Crises

Yet in that same period Germany has passed through several crises and emerged from the shadow of various perils, contrary to the expectation of many. We are reasonably certain now that Germany will not fall to Bolshevism, become a center of anarchy comparable with that existing in Russia. Nor is it less plain that Germany is totally unlikely to dissolve into those component parts which were fused into national unity by Bismarck nearly half a century ago.

All of which means that after defeat, after temporary eclipse, a powerful Germany must emerge from contemporary clouds. Germany has not been destroyed, she remains a nation of more than sixty millions of people, in the heart of Europe, with a genius for organization and a determination to live which must be reckoned with in a future not too distant. Precisely as France after her disasters of 1870 and her hideous domestic tragedy of the Commune in 1871 rallied and remade herself, Germany seems now certain to restore her old strength.

This Germany that we shall presently have to deal with, then, will be in population, aside from Russia, the greatest single nation of the Continent. She will have at least twenty million more people than France; she will be, if she decides to follow old policies and ambitions, quite as dangerous as she was in the past, because, if she has somewhat declined in size, Russia, her old rival and enemy, has disappeared as a potential foe.

Now, the great question the world has at once to ask, since German rehabilitation is approximately certain, is obvious: Will this restored Germany accept the peace made at Versailles in good faith—will she consent to live under its terms? Or will she observe it only while she is constrained and endeavor to undo its provisions the moment the force behind those provisions is relaxed? In sum, can the Treaty of Versailles become the basis of a reconciliation between the German people and their recent foes, as the Treaty of Paris, following Napoleon's fall, was the basis for ultimate adjustment between the French and their neighbors?

People Won't Accept Treaty of Versailles

The answer is, it seems to me, an emphatic and inescapable negative. The German people cannot be expected to accept the Treaty of Versailles, now or hereafter, except as it is steadily faced with force guaranteeing this treaty which makes it unwise to challenge it. Moreover, nothing is more certain than that this force will not endure, is already beginning to crumble. In the United States, in Great Britain, there is an ever-growing protest, not against the treaty on moral grounds, primarily, but against it as a document which imposes a continuing burden upon the American and British peoples, compels them to maintain

tain a state of armed preparation against some infringement by Germany of the agreement of Paris.

In so far, then, the charge that the Treaty of Versailles is a peace of force is justifiable. It is a peace containing conditions which preclude conciliation, understanding, a restoration of amicable relations between the German people and the rest of the world. It is a treaty which demanded and demands continuing force on the part of the conquerors of Germany to preserve it intact. Up to this point I think there is general agreement on all sides, on the part of critics and defenders of the document alike. Both recognize that Germany, the German people, can not and will not accept the terms, that the dream of a year ago of a peace of reconciliation has been shattered.

France Expects Foe To Revolt Against Terms

But from this point of agreement the opinion of various fractions of the world travels in divergent directions. It is asserted by some that the German people will never accept the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, which was not only inevitable but was accepted by the German government as a condition antecedent to any armistice. It is asserted by many others, with even greater emphasis, that the Sarre Basin provisions will result in a new Franco-German antipathy, will create a new Alsace-Lorraine. Finally, it is argued that the provisions of the treaty reestablishing Poland and depriving Germany of West Prussia, Posen and probably portions of Silesia and East Prussia make any but enforced German submission impossible. While these three conditions are most frequently heard in American and British comments, the French and Continental press generally sees Germany bound in the end to revolt from a situation created by the forcible seizure of all of her colonies, all but a small fraction, by the British.

Now, in this welter of opinion it seems to me it is possible to arrive at certain reasonable conclusions. Germany lost the last war because she allowed herself to become involved in three great rivalries. In taking Alsace-Lorraine from France in 1870 she sinned against the light and against a proud and determined nation; it was always certain that no real reconciliation was possible while this wrong was unrighted; it was always inevitable that, while France would never precipitate a war to regain her provinces, Germany would always have to reckon with French hostility if she ever became involved in any other affair.

In the same way Germany openly challenged Britain on the sea; she not merely became a commercial rival, using the seas with her merchant fleet in the fashion her dominant sea power has always permitted, but she at one time undertook to build a fleet to challenge the British and made plans openly to destroy the British Empire and replace British by German hegemony in Africa and in Asia.

Finally, she was drawn, largely through her alliance with Austria,



into a fatal revival of the age-long hostility between the Slav and the Teuton. The old Polish issue, silenced only while the three states which had partitioned Poland remained friendly, was reopened, with deadly consequences when the war had actually been lost.

America Kept Odds Against the Teutons

But for the Russian revolution this coalition of France, Britain and Russia, aided by Italy, would have defeated Germany. When Russia fell, America took the place vacated by the Slav and restored the fatal odds against the Teuton. It was then established patently that Germany could not hope, even at the most favorable moment, to conquer the Slav, the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon.

Now, the war over, German policy must some time begin to pick up the loose threads. It will find itself in the presence of certain facts. Doubtless German sentiment will for a long time protest against the loss of Alsace-Lorraine, but any attempt to reconquer these provinces would not alone insure immediate war with France, but also with Great Britain and even, conceivably, with the United States.

The reason is plain. British policy was hopelessly muddled in 1871 when Germany was permitted to crush France and mutilate her, without British protest. The consequence was to bring Germany within striking distance of the Channel, to give her precisely the military situation which made the opening campaign of 1914 possible. Never has Great Britain consented that a Continental power should menace her from Belgium, but possession of Alsace-Lorraine made the invasion of Belgium possible, and it has cost the British nearly a million lives to restore the old condition of safety.

If Germany undertakes to come west again, nothing seems more certain than that she will have to face Britain as well as France. Nor can she, if she does not invade Belgium, hope to defeat France, a doubtful

military venture now, given the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France, since the Franco-German frontier is now restricted to the narrow gap between the Rhine and the Moselle. An effort to reopen the question of Alsace-Lorraine, then, would be to reestablish an Anglo-French combination, invite a new blockade, risk all the old perils of 1914-18. Further, if the American Senate accepts the Anglo-French-American treaty of insurance, there would be an American opposition to reckon with also. In so far as Alsace-Lorraine is concerned, therefore, I cannot believe that the new German policy will imitate the old.

Nor is it even as likely that the Germans will renew their challenge to Britain. Their fleet is gone, their commercial navy has been taken over by their victorious enemies. They have neither colonies nor naval stations. To begin commercial existence again they must give bonds to the British for good behavior.

Nor can I see any basis for German hope that what they did not accomplish in the last war, when they had many advantages, now lost, could be won in any later struggle. France after the wars of Louis XIV and Napoleon was compelled to accept British supremacy on the seas. That Germany must make the same sacrifice seems to me equally plain.

Sarre Basin Decision Opposed by Liberals

As to the Sarre Basin, here we touch upon one of the contested questions. So-called Liberals in the United States and England proclaim that this part of the peace treaty is a fatal defect, insuring future wars. But it seems to me this is a gross exaggeration. Certainly forcible annexation, disguised or open, of the inhabitants of this district would be in direct conflict with one of the fourteen points and would be to repeat the action of Germany with respect to Alsace-Lorraine. But the circumstances are totally different. The Germans wantonly destroyed

the French coal mines; they deliberately sought to paralyze French industry. Moreover, they, in their turn, forcibly annexed nearly half of this territory, which had long been French, and contentedly such, when Napoleon fell.

But the Sarre Basin is not a considerable area; it is little more than 12 per cent of the area of Alsace-Lorraine; it has no such history as bound Metz and Strasbourg to France. Moreover, French annexation is predicated upon a favorable plebiscite fifteen years hence, and if the vote went against France, if in the mean time French and German relations had improved, as I feel sure they may, the whole difficulty might be compromised. To attack France as a great power, however productive of disputes in the future, the Sarre Basin does not seem to me certain or even likely to become the basis for a war between Germany and France, since the stake itself is out of all proportion to the risks of war, and the possibilities of a peaceful and satisfactory adjustment are by no means non-existent.

There remains the whole set of problems growing out of the disputes between the Slavs and the Teutons and expressed to-day in the new phase of the Polish question. It is here that it seems to me the possibility of German compliance with the Treaty of Versailles breaks down. It is not difficult to imagine that the completeness of German defeat and the absence of all basis for hopeful resumption of an Anglo-German contest for sea supremacy will in due course lead the Germans to resign both their old ambitions and their ancient colonies, as did the French a century ago.

Nor is it less easy to believe that, given the inextricable intermingling of British and French interests, which makes British defence of France and of Belgium essential to British security, Germany will accept the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine to France and seek through peaceful rather than warlike means to arrive at some settlement of the

Sarre Basin issue, an issue explicable not as a circumstance of any French imperialistic sentiment, but as a detail in the reparation justly demanded of the Germans for their crimes in Northern France.

Germany Will Hope To Retain Silesia

By contrast, who can believe that Germany will accept the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles which divide East Prussia from Pomerania, exclude Danzig from German boundaries and by giving the Poles Posen make Berlin almost a frontier town? And it will be the more intolerable, this new situation, if the inhabitants of upper Silesia, as seems sure, vote to become Poles, depriving the Germans of one of the most valuable mineral districts in Europe or the world.

Perceiving this fact, the liberal elements in Great Britain early assailed the Polish programme of the Paris Conference. It had been agreed that Poland should have Danzig and a wide corridor on either bank of the Vistula, including the Danzig-Warsaw railway. The thing was almost signed, sealed and delivered when British protest produced a sudden reversal by Lloyd George, the corridor was narrowed, Danzig was assigned to the league of nations, while even after the treaty had been drafted and served upon Germany its terms regarding upper Silesia were modified.

The reason was simple. Every sensible Englishman knew that Germany would never consent to a condition which cut her country in two, drove a wedge between East Prussia and the main bulk of German lands, put some hundreds of thousands of Germans (a minority, be it understood) under Polish rule and undid the work of Frederick the Great and his successors in the East. And every sensible Englishman also understood that if this arrangement were imposed upon Germany it would require British as well as

Allies Must Stand Guard on Vistula to Enforce Their Demands or Give Up Poland to Beaten Foe

French troops to maintain it and would abolish all hope of any permanent return to international amity.

Poland Not Granted Full Rights by Treaty

By contrast the Polish arrangement was not only an act of justice but a grudging and incomplete act. Poland did not receive all the lands stolen from her by Prussia in the several partitions. She did not receive Danzig, to which her claim was far stronger than the Jugo-Slav claim to Fiume, which has upset the whole equilibrium of the world. If some thousands of Germans were placed under her rule, not less than 3,500,000 were given to Czechoslovakia without any debate. Moreover, the Germans in many instances were the descendants of colonists sent into Polish lands by the Prussian conquerors. To protest at giving the Sarre Basin to France and at the same time argue against giving Posen or West Prussia to Poland is to fly in the face of all logic and all consistency.

Yet the truth was not less plain, was openly expressed by Americans in Paris—finds its echo in many American journals now—that it was unwise to return Polish lands to Poland, because it insured future war, permanent German hostility. But on the same basis any return of stolen property can be criticized and all application of the right of self-determination becomes dangerous, and even inadvisable. To do justice to Poland was to create a permanent source of German resentment, but was it therefore wrong to do justice? It is in the Polish detail that the so-called liberal argument, criticism, limps most awkwardly.

The reason is patent. American liberalism derives its inspiration and most of its ideas from British liberalism. But British liberalism is far more practical. To commit Britain to a policy of maintaining the integrity of Poland against permanent German menace seemed a wholly undesirable venture in many quarters, some of which had openly advocated British neutrality when Belgium was invaded and the destruction of France was threatened. As a matter of policy the criticism is incomprehensible; as matter of ethics it is hardly defensible.

Yet everything which has happened in recent months indicates that Germany, bowing to the Western decisions, holds herself rigidly against the Eastern terms. She is doing everything to make the plebiscite in upper Silesia a farce, she is holding on in Danzig and even in the Baltic provinces. Every expression which comes from Germany indicates that the common thought of all Germans is to revise the Eastern settlement at the earliest moment, to destroy the Polish kingdom, to do it even at the risk of another world war.

But the Polish question is not simple and single. France has undertaken her ancient rôle of protector of the Poles. The Polish army is offered by Frenchmen; it has derived its spirit from the French. For France, for French safety in Europe, it is an important circumstance that Germany should have on the

east a powerful neighbor, ready to join with France if the German should set out on his old pathways again. A Polish state of 30,000,000 inhabitants solidly allied with France is a very real insurance against German aggression.

But at this point French and British policies divide. The British recognize the necessity of standing with France in any German assault upon the west. The eastern frontiers of Belgium and France are the eastern frontiers of Britain. But if Britain is ready to stand with France and for France at the Rhine, she finds herself less willing to stand with France and Poland on the lower Vistula or the upper Oder. She sees with real anxiety and open protest the development of a French Continental policy which aims at protecting those states, particularly that Polish state called into existence by the Treaty of Versailles, but forever dependent upon outside aid for existence.

Eastern Problems Cause a Division

American liberals, taking color from British, are echoing their note with increasing insistence. They are accusing France of militaristic and imperialistic policies. But why? Mainly because France is seeking to guarantee the integrity of Poland, of a Polish state created under the application of the very principles enthusiastically affirmed by the liberals of the world one year ago. Yet it was these same liberals who, in defiance of their principles, succeeded in persuading Lloyd George to use his influence to have the neck of the new Poland narrowed so that there could be no question that Germany could encompass it with her fingers. Poland was the plain product of their principles, but to-day they renounce the conclusion which followed inevitably upon their premises.

That we shall have war one day over Poland seems to me certain. I cannot conceive of any powerful nation—and Germany will be powerful—consenting to the conditions created in the Vistula Valley. That France would be involved as the protector of Poland, Britain as fatally involved in the maintenance of France, the United States if we become the guarantor of the Treaty of Versailles and a party to the league of nations, is at least likely. But what is the alternative—to turn back to German tyranny 4,000,000 Prussian Poles, to recant our declaration in favor of self-determination in general and our peaceful pledge in the matter of the Poles? In my judgment a reconciliation, a peace of understanding, a healing peace, is possible between Germany and her old foes, between Germany and France, even on the basis of French possession of Alsace-Lorraine and the Sarre, provided France and Great Britain will forsake the Poles as both did a century ago at the Congress of Vienna.

But this is just the sort of bargain which made the Congress of Vienna notorious and preserved the Balkan disease until it poisoned the whole system of Europe. That it is possible, that it is well-nigh inevitable if the United States clears out of Europe and turns its back upon the small nations for whose existence it is in no small degree responsible, must be patent. This is the direction British policy is taking. This is the policy that is being more and more forcibly urged upon France by the British; this is the policy which is more and more finding favor in many American quarters. In this there is nothing new; civilization has disputed over the corpse of Poland on many occasions since the First Partition, and many wars have at least been postponed by a mutual participation in a plundering of Poland, but the astonishing fact is that in the end the Polish question has reappeared.

However, the thing which seemed worst emphasizing was the fact that after a year it had become clear that there could be no further hope that Germany would accept the terms of the Treaty of Versailles save under continuing pressure; that she was bound in the end to seek by force to amend these terms, not in the West but in the East; that in the West the victorious nations were now confronted with the choice between mounting guard on the Vistula and preserving the league of nations as an alliance against Germany or retiring from Poland, surrendering it to Germany and by this sacrifice clearing the way for a "healing peace" with Germany.

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"Petrograd, the City of Living Dead"

A N OFFICER of high rank in the former Russian army, who had been compelled to serve under the Bolsheviks, communicates, on his recent escape to England, the following account of conditions in Petrograd: "The London Times."

"Less than four weeks ago I was in Petrograd, bound to the pitiless machine of Bolshevism, and, although nominally a free citizen in a free republic, yet in fact a slave in every way worse off than the bondman of Rome. To-day, a stranger in a strange land, I feel at last what it is like to breathe the air of freedom.

"So little is known of what is happening in Bolshevik Russia to-day that it may be useful and timely if I jot down a few of my impressions. Perhaps it is difficult after so many months of suffering, even to pretend to be impartial. To my mind it is inconceivable for any sane man—whatever his station in life—to escape from the remorseless iron hand of Bolshevism without a deep hatred for Leninism. Nevertheless, I will only write of what I have myself seen in Petrograd, and will attempt to give a faithful objective picture of conditions—one cannot write life—in the dead city to-day.

"I left Petrograd at midnight on

July 10, but I am not at liberty to disclose my means of departure. To get away from Soviet Russia is almost impossible, and I do not wish to close an avenue of escape that may mean liberty for some other person daring enough to overcome them. Although I left on the 10th, I actually have news of Petrograd up to midnight on the 18th, when a trusted friend sent me a letter which found its way over the frontier.

"It Is a City of Living Skeletons"

"The first thing that strikes the observer who enters Petrograd is the mournful solemnity of the streets. It is like walking through some long disused and greatly neglected cemetery. The streets at all times of the day are very, very quiet, while one can walk for hours in the evening without meeting a soul. It is impossible to find in Petrograd a man or woman with even an ounce of fat. It is a city of living skeletons. Protracted starvation has ended in the skin shrivelling up and everybody looking exceedingly old and tired.

"In the streets there is little traffic of any sort. Every now and then a tramway car stumbles along. The

trams run very irregularly till 6 o'clock, but are more than sufficient to meet the demand, since the fare now is 1½ rubles for any distance. The old tramway lines have long ago become a memory. For one thing there are a few who have strength or energy enough to struggle for anything, and the predominant feeling in the minds of the inhabitants is to conserve strength as much as possible.

"The streets are indescribably dirty. For a long time there has been no attempt at cleaning, the scavenging of the city being left to the sun, rain, and wind. Nauseous pools and rubbish heaps are to be found at every corner, while in not a few streets grass is to be seen growing not only on the pavements, but in the middle of the street.

Women as Policemen Are Guarding Streets

"Occasionally a Soviet cart dragged along by cadaverous horses jolts along. These carts, as indeed all vehicular traffic, are stopped periodically by the town police, or rather militia. Two-thirds of this police force are made up of women wearing long blue coats and dresses with a badge on the right arm showing the letters 'G. M.' that is Gorodskaya Militsia (municipal militia).

These policemen always patrol in couples. They carry loaded rifles and are very strict and well disciplined.

"All shops are shut. Until quite recently a certain amount of latitude was shown to the cooperatives, but even these have now shared the fate of other distributors, and the only place where anything can be obtained is from the Soviet stores. So thorough have the Soviets been in this respect that they have even succeeded in exterminating the 'bagman,' the privateers in foodstuffs, who took incredible risks in order to be able to supply people with extra ration foods.

"In the past the population was divided into categories, the so-called bourgeoisie, who were in the fourth category, being on starvation rations which had to be eked out by purchases from the bagmen. To-day the categories have been done away with. There is only one ration and it is served out to men, women and children alike. Food cards are necessary and these are only given to those who do some work; and as all work is under the control and for the benefit of the Soviets it follows that everybody in Petrograd to-day is compelled to do something or other to aid the Soviets.

"The day's ration in Petrograd July consisted of the following: One

plate of soup, consisting of hot water, with a little fish in it; one-eighth of a pound of bread. The cost of this meal, which has to last all day, is 83.00. The food can be eaten in the communal dining rooms, which are to be found all over the city, or it can be taken home. It is very seldom, however, that anybody takes food home. There is such a scarcity of fuel in Petrograd that it would be almost impossible to warm the food, and half the satisfaction in eating, in the warm, obtained from the soup.

Only One Meal a Day Is Usual Ration

"In the morning a drink of some sort is made by stewing wild berries. For a long time now we have had no tea, coffee, or cocoa, and even the Ersatz foods were long ago consumed. Those who are very careful occasionally leave over a tiny morsel of bread, so as to eat it in the morning and thus have a breakfast, but the majority just eat the one meal. Meat is quite unknown, and sugar has also entirely disappeared.

"You will realize from my description of Petrograd as it really is to-day—starving, half dead, overworked, thoroughly cowed—that it is quite impossible for the inhabitants to rise

against the Bolsheviks, the more so as the latter have by now seized practically all arms hidden by the bourgeoisie.

German Influence Felt Despite Paris Treaty

"The people of Petrograd manage to keep more or less in touch with current events, news trickling through certain channels. The Soviets regard the British government's announcement of a withdrawal as a slight from the Bolsheviks, and are very proud of their so-called 'defeat of the Entente.' "I had pretty good sources of information in Petrograd, and there is not the slightest doubt that to-day, as always, Lenin and the Soviet executive chiefs generally are firmly convinced of the necessity of worldwide revolution. While they are wise enough to let the Germans train the Soviet troops, they still regard propaganda as the first line of attack, and believe that it is this rather than arms which will enable them to triumph over the present social system. It is very doubtful, by the way, whether the German elements have ever been stronger in Petrograd than they are to-day. There are special German Soviets formed from the prisoners of war, and, as may be expected, they occupy privileged positions. It is not generally known what work they are doing, but it is believed that they are in the closest touch with Germany."